

80 PAGES
SUGGESTED
FOR MATURE
READERS



MS. TREE
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Ms. TREETM

QUARTERLY

A COMPLETE
Ms. Tree Thriller
by MAX ALLAN COLLINS
and TERRY BEATTY

PLUS:

MIDNIGHT

by Edward Gorman
and Graham Nolan

THE BUTCHER

by Mike Baron and
Silver Anton Persa



EVEN WHEN A COLLEGE IS IN THE BIG CITY, IT'S A LITTLE WORLD ON ITS OWN. TONIGHT WAS HOMEcoming—and the smell of burning leaves was in the air. And the smell of victory. I wouldn't be a part of it, though.

I DON'T ASK
THE TEAM.

NOT EVEN THE JAVELIN VARSITY. SO MUCH FOR MY DREAMS OF BEING A FOOTBALL HERO. I WAS TOO SMALL. THEY SAID NOT TALL ENOUGH, NOT HEAVY ENOUGH.



MY NAME IS MICHAEL TREE. NO—NOT TREE, NOT THAT "PEANUT" NAME EITHER. YOU'VE HEARD ABOUT IN THE PAPERS (PROBABLY IN YOURS IN "WALKING JUNK" THAT WANTS TO KNOW "CHECK-OUT-LANE" TYPE).



BEING ALL-STATE IN HIGH SCHOOL HADN'T COUNTED FOR JACK.



HIS NAME TREE. HIS NAME STEPHEN—JAMES TREE, JR. ANY GOOD NAME IS PRIVATE PROPERTY, TOO. HIS FOOT KICKED THE LIGHT HE KICKED HER. NOT MUCH OF A MARRIAGE AND NOTHING CAN BE. BUT SHE'S MY STEPHEN JUST THE SAME.



WHY, I'M IN MY BEST YEAR OF CITY COLLEGE, LAKEMOORE CAMPUS. TAKING BUSINESS 101 OUT OF MY HAND. WISHING I WERE TALLER, AND RICHER.



LOOK AT THAT COOL SCOTT! DOESN'T THAT MAKE YOU JEALOUS?

FEELS THE BARE, BARE BULLY -- PLEASE?

WHEN I WOULDN'T HAVE FELT SO DOWN IF I'D HAD LISA AROUND. BUT MY GIRL HAD GONE TO MEXICO. BY KISSING WITH HER LATE MOTHER'S FRIEND. SHE SAID SHE LOVED ME... BUT RIGHT NOW HADN'T OUR TIME...



LISA AND ME, OUR "TIME" WAS IN THE FUTURE. ME AND BRADSHAW. BUT THAT WAS IN THE PAST. THE PRESENT WAS FULL CLASSES AND A GRADE POINT LOWER THAN A CUPCAKE AKA.



ARE WE GOING PUT UP WITH THAT?

MAN?

JEES? I'M TRYING TO EAT!

"SOMEBODY OUGHTA DO SOMETHING ABOUT THOSE FREAKS," BILLY SAID. "GUY'S I SAID, 'WHEEL AND TREAD... JUST BLOW IT OFF...'"



"BLOW IT OFF" IS BUILT.

YEAH?

DO IT, MAN!

MAN, SCOTT... COME UP...

YOU GO ON AND HANG OUT. TRILL... I GOTTA DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS!









SKELETON IN THE CLOSET

I DON'T REMEMBER SAYING THE THINGS THEY SAY TO ME. I DON'T REMEMBER MUCH AFTER I GOT THAT GUY ON THE GROUND...

YOU
RAGGOT...
YOU RAGGOT...
RAGGOT!

MY FATHER WAS A BAD
TENDER, TOO. I THINK
THROUGH SOME THINGS
WE'RE JUST BORN WITH
AND WE CAN'T HELP IT.

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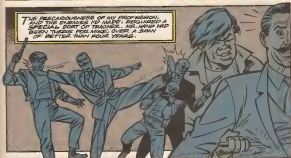
MY NAME IS MICHAEL TRIBE. I'VE BEEN MARRIED ONCE—BRIEFLY—AND MY ONLY CHILD IS MY STEPSON, MIKE. IN FACT, IT'S ALWAYS BEEN A LITTLE STRAINED BETWEEN US.



FOR A LONG TIME, MIKE HAD HAD A TUTOR. AN ENGLISHMAN NAMED BARNAB HANCOCK. WHO WAS A SPECIALIST IN PLAYING BOTH BODYCHECKER AND STRATEGIST. AND SOME OF WHAT HE TAUGHT MIKE HANCOCK IN THE YEARS.



THE POLICEDNESS OF MY PROFESSION, AND THE BUSINESS I'D MADE, CONSIDERED A SPECIAL SORT OF TEACHING. MR. HANCOCK HAD BEEN TEACHING POLICEDNESS OVER A HUNDRED OF BETTER THAN FIVE YEARS.



AFTER MR. HANCOCK HAD FINISHED, HE TOLD A PRIVATE ACADEMY FOR A WHILE, BUT EVENTUALLY MIKE HANCOCK GOT IN FIGHTING SCHOOL. HE DID IN FIVE — HE WAS A FOOTBALL STAR, AND HONORING KID.



NOW THAT HE WAS IN COLLEGE, IT SEEMED A LITTLE LATE IN THE GAME FOR HIM — AND MIKE — HE WAS CALLED TO THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE.



THE CRY OF MARK SHOOK MARSH WITH AWE, AND MARSH SAID "WOW AS FIRM AS HIS THINLY DREAMY EXPRESSION. HE ASKED ME TO SIT DOWN."

"... CAMPUS SECURITY PICKED IT UP. NEITHER BOY HAD TO BE HOSPITALIZED. THANKFULLY, THE COLLEGE INFIRMARY WAS ABLE TO PATCH THEM UP."



ARE THOSE BOYS TO BE ANY CHARGES FILED?



NO, THE WITNESSES DON'T ALL AGREE, BUT IT WOULD SEEM THE BOY, MARK ELLI, STRUCK YOUR SON'S FOREHEAD. SCOTT SAID FIRST, APPARENTLY YOUR BOY TRIED TO BREAK IT UP, AND THEN THINGS GOT OUT OF HAND...



WHAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND, MOTHER, IS THE PROSECUTOR. YOUR SON EXHIBITED. IF THE RULE BOY WASN'T SO PHYSICALLY FIT, I'M AFRAID MINE MIGHT HAVE KILLED HIM.



Oh, dear.

"DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHY YOUR SON'S ROOM WOULD BE PLAY SCHEDULED? MARSHED? HE HAS BEEN KILLED. THE INCIDENT APPARENTLY BEGAN WITH YOUR FATHERS BATTING BILE AND THE FRIEND, AND YOUR SON'S ROOM WAS KILLED. DECIDEDLY FINAL HONORIFIC EPITHETS."



"DEAN CAMPBELL," I SAID, "YOU COLLECTED A LOT OF A GUY NAMED WILLIAM ROBERT ROBERTS."



GOOD GOD... BULLY BOB.
THE NAME RESEMBLES...
YOU WERE INVOLVED
IN THAT, WEREN'T YOU?
I READ ABOUT THAT IN
THE PAPERS AT THE TIME.



MIKE WOULD HAVE
BEEN A VICTIM NUMBER
SEVENTEEN, IF I HADN'T
BOTTLED THERE FIRST.



"YEE... I SAID, 'I HAD INVOLVED
IN IT. I SHOW THAT BOB
IN OCTOBER, HE KILLED
SEVENTEEN OTHERS — SEPTEN
HE WAS LINED WITH THEM."



"WAS THE BOY... WAS HE MOLESTED?"
THE DEAN ASKED.
"YEE... I SAID, 'BUT HE EXTENDED
TERRIBLE AT THE END, NOT THE LEAST
OF WHICH WAS MURDER.'
DOAN'T TELL UPON A YOUNG
PERSON OF HIS."



MIKE NEEDS COUNSELING, AND THAT
IS OBVIOUSLY HAS A GOOD DEAL OF AGONY
BOTTLED UP IN HIM. AND PERHAPS, YOU
HAVE ENCOUNTERED A MORE MODEST OF
VIOLENCE, WHICH MAY NEED TO BE
APPROACHED.



I'LL
TALK TO
MIKE.



"SEE THERE — I SHOULD WARN
YOU... I'LL EXPLAIN THIS
AS BEST I CAN, BUT BE
PREPARED FOR THE WORST
... THE BOY, MARK DUB,
WROTE FOR THE BLADE.
YOU DO KNOW WHAT
THAT IS?"



I CAN'T
SAY I
DO...

IT BEGAN TWO YEARS AGO,
HERE ON CAMPUS...A
LITERARY MAGAZINE WITH
FULL COLLEGE APPROVAL.

"THE EDITOR WAS A YOUNG MAN NAMED
ALEXANDER SEAT. A TALENTED YOUNG
MAN WHO HAPPENED TO BE GAY AND WHO
SHARED THE BLADE WITH OTHERS LIKE
HIM."



"SOON, RATHER PROMINENT GAY NATIONAL
FIGURES APPEARING IN THE BLADE —
FICTION, PHOTOGRAPHS, MILDLY SCANDALOUS
THINGS WERE SHOWN BY GAY DISPLEASURES
EXPRESSED BY CERTAIN KEY ALUMNI."

"THE PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE
RECOMMENDED DISCONTINUING THE
PUBLICATION, AND I AGREED. I THOUGHT
THEM OFF CAMPUS. THESE TWO GUYS
A FIRM... THE A.E.L.U. GOT INVOLVED."



SOMEHOW SEAT ACCUSED THE
NATIONAL BRANCH OF CONTINUAL. HE
BEGAN LOCALLY IN AN UNDERGROUND
MAGAZINE, AND IT JUST TOOK OFF,
INCIDENTLY, I UNDERSTAND THE BLADE
ATTAINED NATIONAL DISTRIBUTION.

WE TOOK -- SEAT MADE HIS MISTAKE WHEN
HE STARTED RECKLESS TACTICS... HE
ALL BUT INVENTED THE CURRENT
PRACTICE OF "OUTING," FOR EXAMPLE...



"THE BULKY BOY WAITING FOR GRANT REGULARLY... AS DO OTHER GUYS ON THE CAMPUS. YOU'D BEST BRACE YOURSELF FOR REPERCUSSIONS."





THE NEXT DAY I WENT ON WITH MY LOVE,
AND BUSINESS, AND — FRANKLY —
MAYBE I'VE HAD FORTY NINCH OUT
OF BRIGHT, OUT OF MIND.

IS THE MOUNDEL CAME
FILE, DEARY,
BY FILE 9

RIGHT
HERE.

BUT THINGS WERE MATTERING
ON CLASSIES THAT WOULD
HAVE DISTURBED ME,
HARD I KNOW...

LOOK AT THOSE
KIDNAP, AND THE
STUPID DEMONSTRATION
WAS DO THEY THINK
HIS IS THE GO'S ?

FORGET IT, BILLY,
LET'S JUST GET
TO CLASS.





WELL, THANK YOU, DEAN CALVERT. THAT ALREADY IS A RELIEF AT ANY RATE.



WIDE IN TROUBLE IS AGAIN.

ANOTHER MESSAGE WITH SOME CAMPUS SAYS... THIS TIME, ANTI-RAPE PROTESTERS WOULD TO GOAT AWAY UP.

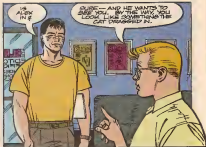


NORMAN WAS HURT EARLY, INCLUDING THE CAMPUS SECURITY BECAME IT UP FIRST.

GOING FIND OUT ARE HAND IS AVAILABLE. WILL YOU?



"AND, ROGER -- SEE WHAT YOU CAN FIND OUT FOR ME ABOUT THIS GUY MAGAZINE PUBLISHED LOCALLY, THE *BLADE*."



"IS ALVIN IN?"

"SURE -- AND HE WANTS TO SEE YOU. BY THE WAY, YOU LOOK LIKE SOMETHING THE CAT DRAGGED IN."



"JESSE, MARK -- I HOPE THE OWNED GUY LOOKS WORSE!"

"ACTUALLY, HE DIDN'T. THAT'S WHY I WANT YOUR HELP, ALVIN."



"THE LITTLE BRIST THAT DID THIS TO ME LOOKS STRIPPED."

"YOU'RE ADDING!"



"WE'VE HAD MORE ON THE LINE FOR A LONG TIME... BUT WE DIDN'T HAD ENOUGH TO GO WITH."



"HELL -- COULDN'T WE STRETCH IT? IT'S A GREAT STORY, AND THE LOT OF LATE ATTENTION BRING A DAY ENOUGH TO DO SUCH... GO SHERIFF..."



"ROGER, IN THE LAMPHOUSE,"
I SAID. "I THINK," HE SAID,
"IT'S BULLY AND WASTY...
PARTICULARLY THE LATTER,
CONSIDERING THE T. BARTON
BASTY IS GOING TO BE HERE."
BACK AT THE OFFICE, I
CALLED MY ATTORNEY ON
THE 800. HER NAME



"YOU KNOW,
I DON'T
REALLY
CARE..."



"THE CHARGE IS
FALSE, BUT I'M USED
TO FALSE ALIBIS BEING
SAID ABOUT ME IN
THE PAST. SO I DON'T
WORRY ABOUT IT..."

"YOU'D BE
SURPRISED PERCEIVED
AS HONORABLE BY
IMPOSING LEGAL LAWS.
YOU'D BE SAYING
IN EFFECT THAT
HONORABILITY
IS HONORABLE."



"BUT SOMEONE
INNOCENT IS GOING
TO BE KILLED."



"MY
WHAT A BARE
OCCURRENCE"



"YOU
WANTED ME
WAS THAT?"

"WELL THAT
WAS THAT"



"ON HIS TREE, BUT THERE
ANYTHING THAT CAN
BE DONE?"
"THERE'S SOMETHING,"
I SAID.



TELL ALEXANDER THE
GREAT THAT HIS TREE
IS HERE TO SEE HIM.
I DON'T HAVE AN
APPOINTMENT, BUT SHOW
HIM MY BUSINESS CARD.



YOU DO HAVE STYLE,
MR. TREE. I'VE ALWAYS
ADVISED THAT ABOUT
YOU. THAT ELEGANT
LAYOUT IN INTERVIEW?
OUTRAGEOUS, SUCH
HIGH CAMP.



I'LL TELL YOU WHAT'S "OUTRAGEOUS"
MR. GRAY. THIS "OUTING" YOU'VE
PLANNED FOR ME. I THOUGHT YOU
SHOULD BE MADE AWARE OF A FEW
PERTINENT FACTS... OR RATHER, MY
APPOINTMENT AND I THINK YOU SHOULD
BE MADE AWARE OF A FEW
PERTINENT FACTS.



I'M NOT GAY. I HAVE NOTHING AGAINST
GAYS. I HAVE NO PARTICULAR
OPINION ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY
ONE WAY OR ANOTHER...



...OTHER THAN
I THINK PEOPLE
HAVE A RIGHT TO
LIVE. HOWEVER,
LIVE MEANT, SO
LONG AS THEY
AREN'T SCREWING
UP SOME INNOCENT
BUTTERFLY'S
LIFE.



THERE'S VERY LITTLE "INNOCENT" ABOUT MISS ANTHEA. YOU HAVE A BOX SCORE ON MURDER AND MAYHEM THAT WOULD MAKE SCANDAL WALK... AND ADD A FICTIONAL CHARACTER...

TAKE A LOOK AT THIS.



WE'VE DONE OUR HOMEWORK. WE HAVE THE PROOF TO BACK OUR STORY UP... AND ADDENDUMS FROM A NUMBER OF WITNESSES TO YOUR LIAISONS.



AS FOR YOU AND YOUR ATTORNEY, YOU'RE A FORTUNE MAKING US THERE — YOU HAVE TO TAKE YOUR LIAISON COMING WITH THE TERRITORY.



THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT! YOU'RE INVADING THE PRIVACY OF A WOMAN WHO IS INNOCENT OF THESE CHARGES!

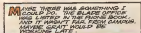
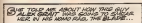


THERE ARE NOT "CHARGES" MR. TREE... THE BLADE FINDS NOTHING AT ALL "WORTH" WITH HOMOSEXUALITY. AND IF YOU — AND YOUR ATTORNEY — WOULD CARE TO BRAND YOURSELF AS ANTI-GAY, THAT'S UP TO YOU.



I'M NOT ANTI-GAY — I'M ANTI-BLARGELLE... AND YOU QUALIFY! DON'T TALK GARBAGE AND I WILL DO SOME GAY BASHING... AND BLESS WHAT GAY I INTEND TO BASH IN!





THE FRONT DOOR WAS LOCKED BUT I COULD SEE A LIGHT ON INSIDE. MAYBE THERE WAS A BACK WAY...



THERE WAS



WHEN I KNOCKED ON THE DOOR, IT OPENED... MUST'VE BEEN ALIVE...



SOMEONE ELSE HAD ALREADY TALKED TO GRANT TONIGHT. I DON'T KNOW IF THE BLADE HAD BEEN THE TOPIC OF DISCUSSION, BUT SOMEBODY ELSE HAD MADE THEIR POINT WITH A BLADE.







I KNEW WHO'D BE AROUND TO SEE ME.
FOUR THING THE NEXT MORNING.

LET MURDER
DO HIS OWN
JOB FIRST.

TAKE HIM TO
THE CONFERENCE
ROOM, EYES — AND WHEN
YOU SEE HIM LEAVE, HAVE
DAN AND RONNIE MEET ME
THERE... AND COME
ALONG YOURSELF.



GRANT TOLD HIS PEOPLE YOU THREATENED HIM
WHEN YOU WENT TO SEE HIM YESTERDAY
AFTERNOON... AND THE POINT OF HIS MEET
WAS CORRUPTION.

DO
TELL.



I KILLED EVERYBODY
THAT AFTERNOON, DAN E.
HE'D BE A BUSY GUY.



YOU ARE A BUSY GUY.
DID YOU KILL HIM?



NO. I WAS CONSIDERING LEGAL
ACTION AGAINST HIM. CHECK WITH
MY ATTORNEY — HE'LL CONFIRM
AS MUCH.

OH —
AM I
LEAVING
ALREADY?

SAFE DIDN'T ASK ME FOR A STATEMENT OR ANYTHING.

HE DIDN'T KNOW YOU'RE A SUSPECT YET. BUT HE WILL SOON ENOUGH. AND HE'LL BE ONTO ARRETS TOO.

WENT'S ALL THIS ABOUT ANYWAY?

DAN GREEN'S RELATIVE YOUTH WAS OFFICED BY INTELLIGENCE AND TROUBLEMAKING. IN HIS WAY, DAN WAS AS GOOD A DETECTIVE AS ANYONE. I CALLED HIM IN.

WE NEED TO STAY A STEP AHEAD OF SAFE. IF WE WANT TO PROTECT RUFFIE AND MIKE.

THAT'S WHY WE'RE DROPPING EVERYTHING. AND ALL THOSE OF US ARE GOING OUT INTO THE FIELD ON THIS... RIGHT NOW.

DAN, I WANT YOU TO TALK TO MARRASALE AND HIS BROTHER STEVE SHAWARDS. THE OTHER BOY INVOLVED IN THAT REAR INCIDENT AT THE COLLEGE.

INTRODUCE YOURSELF AS A DETECTIVE WORKING ON THE MURDER. BUT DON'T MENTION MIKE OR THIS INVESTIGATION INC. IT'LL ONLY MAKE THEM HOSTILE.

CORRECTION. I CALLED COMB. LEVY AT THE TIME. HE HAD THE EVIDENCE ON THE WIDEY THIS MORNING ABOUT THE MURDER. AND WE GAVE ME THE NAME OF ALICE GRANT'S LOVER...







"MR. TROMPER, IS THERE ANYONE IN PARTICULAR YOU SUSPECT...?"

"MR. TROMPER, I CAN GIVE YOU QUITE A LIST OF SUSPECTS."

"ARE YOU SURE YOU'D INTERESTED YOUR WORK-OUT...?"

"AND THE HELL ARE YOU?"



"MR. GREEN, I'M A DETECTIVE WORKING ON THE GRAY HORNET CASE..."

"YOU'RE NO COP."



"I RECOGNIZE YOU FROM THE PAST. YOU'RE MR. GREEN, RIGHT-HAND MAN!"



"WELL, I'M NOT ANYBODY'S LEFT-HAND MAN. THAT'S FOR SURE. LOOK, I'M JUST TRYING TO FIND OUT WHO KILLED YOUR PAL GRAY. AREN'T YOU INTERESTED IN HELPING OUT?"

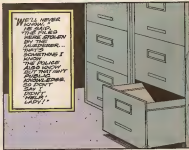


"WELL, NO, I'M NOT INTERESTED IN HELPING THAT FASCIST CATCH AND HIS BULLY-BOY OFFSPRING."







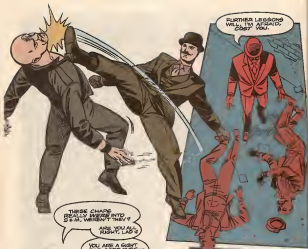












YOUR STEPMUM HIRED ME ON TO LOOK AFTER YOU. I'VE BEEN KEEPING AN EYE ON YOU -- FROM A DISTANCE -- NOT WANTING TO INVADE YOUR PRIVACY.

IF I'D BEEN MORE ABOVE-BOARD ABOUT IT, I WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO INTERVIEW HIM SOONER, WITH THOSE BLACK-JACKET BLOODS.

MY APOLOGIES.

THAT'S OKAY. AS BULL-HEADED AS FIVE BUNCH LATELY, I'D HAVE PROBABLY REQUESTED IT, AND GIVEN YOU A BAD TIME. IN A LITTLE OLD FOR A TUTOR, AND I WANT TO BE MAN ENOUGH TO TAKE CARE OF MYSELF.

TO DEMONSTRATE SOME FELLOW COUNTRYMEN OF MINE, WE ALL SET BY WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS. EN, LAD?

"YOU'RE RIGHT, MR. HAND. MAYBE IT'S TIME I OWNED UP TO THE FACT THAT MY EMPATHY WAS REALLY ON MY SIDE."

I GOT SOME INTERESTING INFO FROM STEVE GARDNER. MARK RILEY'S MAIN SOURCE...

IT WAS LONG AFTER BUSINESS HOURS, BUT WE'D AGREED TO MEET AT THE OFFICE. AFTER WE'D EACH SOAKED OUT TO INTERVIEW OUR RESPECTIVE LEADS, ROBERT WASN'T BACK YET.

ALEXANDER GRAY WASN'T AS YOUNG AS HE LOOKED. HE WAS PUSHING THIRTY.

BUT HE WAS A COLLEGE GRADUATE, TILL JUST A FEW YEARS AGO.

APPARENTLY HE WENT TO GRAD SCHOOL YEARS AFTER HIS UNDERGRADUATE WORK.

BRANDON THOUGHT GRAY HAD BEEN LIVING A STRAIGHT LIFE, BUT IN THE STRAIGHT WORLD, AND WENT BACK TO COLLEGE, AND INTO THE ARMY, SPECIFICALLY TO ADOPT AN OPENLY GAY LIFE-STYLE.



DON'T MIND. GRAY WAS THIRTY-ONE YEARS OLD. AND NOT ONLY DID HE LIVE A STRAIGHT LIFE FOR A HUNDRED OF YEARS, HE WAS MARRIED, A FATHER OF TWO.

GRAY

HIS LOVER, BILL THOMPSON, WAS VERY COOPERATIVE. HE GAVE ME THE WIFE'S NAME AND ADDRESS... SHE'S LOCAL.



I FIGURED "ALEXANDER GRAY" WAS A PHONY NAME, BUT NEITHER THE PAPERS OR THE COPE COINCIDED IT—THAT HE ANYWAY OF, ANYWAY.



WELL, HE CHANGED HIS NAME, SPECIFICALLY TO GRAY, YEARS TIME AGO... THAT MAY BE THE REASON, ANYWAY. I DIDN'T FOLLOW UP ON THE... ENOUGH YOU'D WANT TO DO IT YOURSELF.



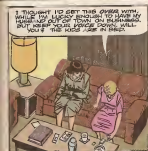


THANK YOU FOR
KEEPING ME AT SUCH
SHORT NOTICE. NO PROBLEM
AND AT THE MOMENT...

DID I
HAVE A
CHOICE?



I'VE HEARD OF YOU
FOR YEARS. AHEAD OF
YOU. I KNOW NOW
FOR SURE
YOU CAN DEL.



I THOUGHT I'D GET THIS OVER WITH.
WHILE YOU WERE ENOUGH TO HAVE MY
HUSBAND OUT OF TOWN ON BUSINESS.
BUT KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN. WILL
YOU? THE KIDS ARE IN BED.



YOU'VE
REMARKED.

YES TO A REAL
MAN... ALTHOUGH,
IT'S FUNNY BUT IT'S
WE'VE NEVER BEEN
ABLE TO HAVE CHILDREN,
TED AND I.



AL WAS A GOOD FATHER
AND A GOOD HUSBAND
IN MANY RESPECTS.
BUT HE LIVED A DOUBLE
LIFE. DO YOU KNOW
WHAT HE DID FOR
A LIVING?

NO.

HE WAS A GOOD SALESMAN.
WELL, MANAGER OF A SHOE STORE.
HIS UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE WAS
IN BUSINESS. I REMEMBER HE TOOK
THE JOB SO HE COULD HANDLE
MEN'S FEET.



I MADE A FEW CALLS ON MY CAR PHONE. ONE OF THEM BROUGHT NO ANSWER. THE OTHER DID...

YOUR HUSBAND'S STILL AT THE COLLEGE? THANK YOU...

BUT HE WASN'T AT THE COLLEGE... AT LEAST NOT AT HIS OFFICE. NO JUST TOLD THERE. I RANDED IN MARK RILEY'S NUMBER...

HE'S NOT HERE, MA TRICE. HE SAID HE WAS MEETING SOMEONE OVER AT THE STUDENT UNION -- AT THE WORK-OUT ROOM. I THINK IT WAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH A BLADE STORY.

THE WORK-OUT ROOM AT THE STUDENT UNION WAS LOCKED BUT THERE WAS LIGHT COMING FROM UNDER THE DOOR.

EXCUSE ME, MAAM-- THAT'S FOR STUDENTS ONLY... MALE STUDENTS ONLY...

AND FINISHED ITS AFTER HOURS. WE CLOSED UP HALF AN HOUR AGO.

UNLOCK THAT DOOR... QUIETLY -- AND THEN GO AWAY. SO CALL THE POLICE ON SOMETHING...

WOMEN WEIGHT ROOM



I'M AFRAID I
HEARD YOU OUT THERE.
MATTERS. YOU'RE NOT
VERY SUBTLE.

SUBTLETY
ISN'T MY LONG SUIT.
BUT NEITHER IS IT
YOUR, BERN-
CALVERT.



OH, I DON'T KNOW.
IF YOU HADN'T DELIVERED
INTO THIS ROOM. NO ONE
WOULD HAVE BEEN HERE
EXCEPT ALBERT CALVERT
WHO WOULD HAVE BEEN
NO LONGER TO
MANKIND.

DR. WENAMUND.
EITHER. NO
ASSUMPTION
FROM ME.





AND GRANT WERE IN A BULLY OF THE FIRST CLASS. THIS LITTLE WORK-OUT "ACCIDENT" YOU'RE DESIGNING FOR HIM WOULD SUIT ME FINE.

SEE, I WAS GOING TO BE THE SUBJECT OF AN "OUTING" ARTICLE ABOUT MY DRUG CALVERT... I CAN SYMPATHIZE... EMPATHIZE, EVEN.



DID YOU... DID YOU SEE THE MATERIAL IN GRANT'S FILE?



NO, BUT I CAN FIND IT. I'M SURE YOU'VE SEARCHED THE MATERIAL IN THAT FILE... OF COURSE THERE COULD BE A DUPLICATE SOMEWHERE.



"MY INVESTIGATIVE STAFF AND I KNEW AT LEAST ONE REDUCER WAS IN THAT 'OUTING' FILE THAT WAS STOLEN THE NIGHT GRANT WAS KILLED... THAT IS, THE NIGHT YOU KILLED GRANT."



YOU WERE THE COLLEGE ADVISOR WHO ENCOURAGED GRANT TO COME OUT OF THE WARD CLOSET. YOU YOURSELF HAD TO HIDE WITHIN, TO PROTECT YOUR CAREER. WERE YOU LOVING IT PROBABLY?

THEN WHEN HE LEFT THE STRAIGHT LIFE TO COME BACK TO BROAD SCHOOL AND THE GAY, YOU HELPED HIM. YOU WERE INSTRUMENTAL IN PUTTING THE COLLEGE LITERARY MAGAZINE -- THE PUBLICATION THAT BECAME THE BLADE -- IN HIS CONTROL.

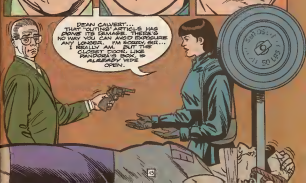
BUT ALEX WASN'T THE GAY KID STRUGGLING WITH HIS FEELINGS OF GAYNESS ANYMORE. WAS HE? HE WAS AN ACTIVIST PRIDE OF HIS SEXUAL IDENTITY.

"AND HE FILLED THE MAGAZINE WITH EXPLICITLY GAY MATERIAL... ENLIGHTENING YOU AND YOUR CONSERVATIVE PERSONA. YOU DINED WITH THE BLUE NOSES AND GOT HIM THROWN OFF CAMPUS."

YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT BARBARA WOULD SEEK HIS REVENGE ON YOU. YOU MUST HAVE KNOWN IT WAS COMING.

HE'D... HE'D LOVED ME ONCE. I THOUGHT... I THOUGHT...

YOU THOUGHT WELSH. SO YOU KILLED HER. NOT A BAD IDEA, REALLY -- BUT WHERE DOES IT GET YOU WITH RULES, EITHER... YOU'LL HAVE TO KILL ME, TOO.





MAYBE SO,
BUT I DON'T
THINK YOU
WANTED IT.
DO I?



WHAT DO YOU
KNOW, RUKE? IF
THAT OLD EDUCATIONAL
ALIAS IS TRUE...
A HAND IS A
TERRIBLE THING
TO WASTE.



IT HAS OVER,
ALREADY.

I ALMOST WISH
WE'D LET CALVERT
SQUATTER THAT
FAR!

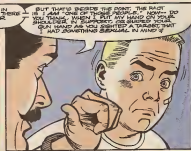
NAKE!



I KNOW, I KNOW --
I SHOULDN'T THINK BADLY
OF THOSE PEOPLE -- WELL,
IF I'VE LEARNED ANYTHING OUT
OF THIS, IT'S THAT ALL GUYS
ARE A JACK, SORRY LOT!

PEOPLE IN GERMANY ARE
A PRETTY BUNCH, TOO ASKE.
BUT IT'S NOT FAIR, IT'S
NOT RIGHT...

M'LEA?





CANNIBAL

ED GORMAN GRAHAM NOLAN JOHN COSTANZA SAM PARSONS MIKE GOLD
story art letters colors editor

 SOME HUMANS
SHOULD BE EATEN.





ONCE AGAIN, THE MAN
NAMED MIDNIGHT IS
SUMMONED.



TWENTY-FOUR HOURS LATER.



THANK
GOD YOU
CAME.

MY SON IS THE ONE
THE POLICE CALL THE
CARNIVAL. I'VE
KNOWN HIS SECRET
ALL MY LIFE.

WHEN HE WAS SIX HE
DESTROYED HIS SISTER'S
CAR AND THEN WENT IT
IN FRONT OF HER. IN
A KIND OF FRENZY I
STILL REMEMBER THE
BURST ALL OVER HIS
FACE AND THE SICK
WAY HE GRINNED
AT ME.

DONALD FINDS HIS VICTIMS BY PLACING ADS IN THE PROBABLY CLOUTIER. HE'S LOOKING FOR WOMEN WHO ARE ASHAMED OF HIS PORNOGRAPHY. BUT PLACING ADS FOR SOMEBODY ELSE, HE'S ASKING HER OVER AND OVER AGAIN.

He's looking for women who are ashamed of his pornography. He's asking her over and over again.

ATTRACTIVE MARRIED MAN who has an interesting marriage is looking for a single or married woman to share his time with. I'm looking for someone who can appreciate me and whom I can give lots of attention to. If interested send photograph and I will respond to you. Only responses containing photographs will be considered. Box 17822.

FASCINATING, ENERGETIC I never get bored black professional male looking for a female woman for fun and fantasy. I like Italian food and foreign movies and have a great sense of humor. If you're interested or open minded and would like to meet a strong man, call Box 17771.

THE AD IS ALWAYS THE SAME. HE SEARCHES ALL THE WOMEN AND FINDS THE RIGHT ONE.

LAMOROSUS I never get bored black professional male looking for a single or married woman to share his time with. I'm looking for someone who can appreciate me and whom I can give lots of attention to. If interested send photograph and I will respond to you. Only responses containing photographs will be considered. Box 17822.

AN INVITATION TO PARADISE successful black-looking woman looking for a single or married woman to share his time with. I'm looking for someone who can appreciate me and whom I can give lots of attention to. If interested send photograph and I will respond to you. Only responses containing photographs will be considered. Box 17822.

ATTRACTIVE MARRIED MAN who has an interesting marriage is looking for a single or married woman to share his time with. I'm looking for someone who can appreciate me and whom I can give lots of attention to. If interested send photograph and I will respond to you. Only responses containing photographs will be considered. Box 17822.

BLACK AT 40, ENERGETIC I never get bored black professional male looking for a female woman for fun and fantasy. I like Italian food and foreign movies and have a great sense of humor. If you're interested or open minded and would like to meet a strong man, call Box 17771.

IF I TELL THE AGENTS WHO MY SON IS, THEY'LL KILL HIM. BUT YOU COULD FIND HIM AND LET ME BRICK TO HIM. THEN TURN HIM OVER TO THE AUTHORITIES.



WILL YOU HELP?

EVERYONE WHOSE NAME KNOWS THAT THE CARD MEANS MIDNIGHT WILL HELP.



NEXT EVENING, MIDNIGHT PAYS A LATE VISIT TO THE BARRAQUANT HOUSE DONALD BURGHEIM LIVES...



WINONA KENT, ZANZIBAR PRISON, 10:30

ZANZIBAR

PARKING
IN REAR

There's a ZANZIBAR in every city and town
in the '70s of A. Where the wildest attributes
of humanity meet and mingle through the
city's lonely night...

I wish I'd had
broader dreams.

Two months since
I've had any
sex...

Oh, Johnny. I wish
you were here tonight
instead of my creepy
husband...

Should I tell
him about that
little infection?
It's mostly gone
by now...

He's got such
fascinating skin.

I know what's
going on, you bitch.
You think I don't?



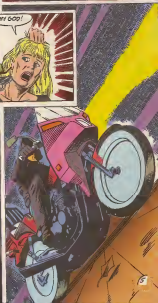
Edwidge Lescarbot's first woman
in the prison



I'm really glad you answered the ad.
I'm having a wonderful time.



So
am I.





LATER THAT NIGHT, REMEMBERING FROM HIS CRASH, MURKIN THINKS ABOUT THE WOMAN HE'LD KNOWNLY MET IN THE BAR...



DURING OF A SLEEPLESS NIGHT...

THE BUILT BURNED BODY OF WHICH, NEXT WAS DISCOVERED ON A NORTHEASTERN HIGHWAY THE MORNING. POLICE RELUCTANTLY ADMITTED THAT PARTS OF HER BODY WERE DAMAGED...





WITH DONALD HARRIS WITH
NOWHERE TO BE FOUND,
MIDNIGHT RESCUE TO A MAN.



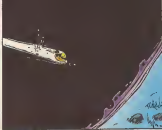
I'VE HAD EVERY
CRICK IN HERE NORTH
HAVING.

BABY, LISTEN. ANDREW HAVE
AN ABORTION. PLEASE.
ALL RIGHT?



WE CAN PUT IT
BACK TOGETHER AGAIN,
JILL. I KNOW ME
BUT.







Learning his son is in mortal
desperation, Thomas Worswerty
has no choice...



MOMENTS LATER...







DC COMICS INC.
200 Park Avenue New York, NY 10022

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1-1139

Dear Max and Friends,

Okay, I'll admit that when I saw the cover and splash page of *MS. TREE* #2, my first thought was, "Oh, no, not another *Shamus* odd story!" I should have known better.

I was getting sick of the widespread *Shamus*-parody griping that certain literary circles and certain parents' groups recently had. Halloweenee characters removed from public classrooms, and was pleased to see an intelligent treatment of *Shamus* and the fact it means to others.

I'm a Christian (Lutheran) myself, but I've always been bothered by the insouciance of my more vocal brethren, however, I've never been able to understand why anyone would worship *Shamus*. While, which no many people have noticed with *Shamus*, is an actually different humor, because it is not as ill related to Christianity. But as for *Shamus*, I could never imagine why (apart from rebellion against traditional values) anyone would choose to worship the symbol of evil.

"The Devil's Footstool" provided a logical rationale for *Shamus* worship. I am understand how some people would worship *Shamus* as a Footstool figure, the provider of divine knowledge. I still don't agree, but now I can understand why others might.

Mind you, I wasn't entirely pleased with the story. I found *Shamus* to be just another stereotypical Fundamentalist, a character which is rapidly growing obsolete. Of course, and I understand culture, the modern, hypocritical Christian also tend to be the most vocal, giving others a distorted view of Christianity. Christian took in *Shamus* do more (in a loose degree), but they are still involved in fiction.

As a satirist, I found *Shamus*'s "philosophy" reminiscent of a quote by G. K. Chesterton: "Worship *Shamus*. Christ died for our sins. Thus we make his sacrifice useless by not committing death." Odd how this idea is being in Allen's hands, but frightened *Shamus*'s. Of course, *Worship* had different "text" in mind.

I must say that I'm truly disappointed in "Midnight." I can't help but feel that the only reason *Midnight* was chosen for review is a "gross, gritty" misclassification by me. This accusation bears absolutely no resemblance to the original, which is good as a story. Since it is the only a new character, it doesn't really invite comparison with the original. It does not "invade" any of Jack Cole's classic stories.

Each Miss
Beauty University
P.O. Box 12122
Atlanta, GA 30302

Dear Max and Terry,

A little better. That's how I'd compare your #1 to #2, but it's blacked becoming a real "vigilante war" I hope not, but it certainly seems that way. Also, maybe I'm

just remembering wrong, but I don't remember seeing thought balloons used in the odd series, as they were in this issue. If I'm remembering correctly, is there a reason for this?

I do hope you are able to write the latest columns, as I always enjoyed your columns in the past. Plus, Mr. Gold doesn't seem to be able to suppress simple sarcasm.

The "Midnight" story sucked. It was full of misanthropic clichés.

Read Avenue
12-11 72th St.
Jackson Heights, NY 11379

It is well-known that Mr. Gold produces complex sarcasm.

Dear Editor,

Mr. Tree is a major-league larry. *Time* magazine wouldn't have it any other way.

Time wants the United States government to stop the pain of an economy.

Therefore, DC Comics — an apple-polishing subsistence of *Time* — whom the magazine paid by showing an editorial picture got over on Mr. Tree. Indeed, Mr. Tree should not be put only when this or another innocent person might be killed.

But without Mr. Tree ought to see jobs on his adventures. That's what *Honey West* would do.

John Belling
13703 Glenview St.
Garden Grove, CA 92645

For the record, DC Comics and *Time* Magazine are different divisions of Time-Warner. *Time* remains part of the old Time-Life magazine group, while DC is part of the Warner Bros. studio. You know the people who make the *Dave Barry* movies.

Love to the *Honey West* references, though.

Dear Miss, Terry Miles, et al.

There is no mark to point out the new *MS. TREE QUARTERLY*, about every 10th *TREE*, as this, the I hardly know where to begin. So I'll just jump in, first group commendation to Mike Gold and DC for having the documents to take on based the (I feel) most well-crafted and interesting comic book ever being produced.

Sincerely, I must state that one of the primary qualities that makes *MS. TREE* so extraordinary is the complete, uncompromising involvement of writers and art, which produces a final complete story within parallel. This is a genuine achievement.

Hence, it is not easy to pull out certain aspects in print, as the whole is more than the sum of its parts (as in all quality

work). So, for the purpose of brevity I will respectfully speak back this letter and comments on *Tree*.

Two points stand out for me in the art in this issue, namely I see Terry really working, positively expanding his previous work. But the image of "Christian type" he supplies, and two the impressive variety of subtle facial expressions for deliveries.

A nice glimpse of Terry's art is that he is working within a tradition, but that's the subject of another letter. On to my second appreciation: We can now go to a corner of the world where all characters seem to survive only only three represented: straight mouth, smiling straight mouth, and screaming. Terry, however, is pointing and extending the medium.

I must object the cover. While I feel the idea of period covers is good, this example is both too well planned, and needless. Yes, yes, yes, well, and I want *MS. TREE* to succeed. But this achievement requires it not in keeping with the character of Mr. Tree. It sounds of so-called "solid" content that we're saying, but that, being rather usually no more than precious publicity-up left over.

Please don't go too far in the direction of child and thereby create a disarming audience. I know you may say that's a weak point, but it is not what Mr. *TREE* is a magazine is always in constant. This cover is outrageous, even Hollywood, which is keeping with our times, not with bias and Terry, who have always managed to include us, but in a most truly adult, mature fashion. Particularly they include us in which Mr. Tree is a knowing participant, but in a world of difference.

I must close with beautiful compliments, though, as the *QUARTERLY* as a whole is so fine. Just such closer to Max and Terry's vision.

Mark Scott Reed
Tarrytown, NY
CH-1000
SWEETLAND

Dear Mr. Gold

MS. TREE QUARTERLY. God, those words sound beautiful.

I don't mind telling you, I've really missed that lady and her head-biting dramatic work. Her head-bite definitely rewards her readers and the classic simplicity of the stories themselves.

When *Midnight* from went under, and with the previous Mr. Tree back with it, it was a low point in my dark in the industry as a whole.

When DC announced plans to revive the character, I could barely believe it. Indeed, and I really had had this man in my hands, I felt really as myself before in DC, the only big publisher in America today that doesn't produce go comic-owned books as a rule, is putting up *MS. TREE*? I don't recall feeling that I'd been over anything.

Still, solid proof is solid proof, and I can't argue the fact that the book is here (in glorious color) and the DC logo is clearly visible in the top left corner. Besides, I'm not going to argue Jaymy's importance (and I'm not back, and hopefully here in my).

This first issue is without question one of the most pleasurable reads I've read in some time. I'd forgotten over the last few years just how good the MS TREE comic book is in full color, and so seeing the other back in that first installment was something of a revelation. I had also forgotten what it was like to get so close to MS TREE story in one shot, unscripted. WHY did it feel good?

I had been intending, when I started reading the issue and thinking about the letter I knew I was gonna write, to ask the we build a monument on any further appearance by the Moore family for a while. I was beginning to think they'd been done to death in the course of the previous book, and I wanted to move on to other things.

These feelings are still there, but after reading this issue's story to its conclusion, they've gone on the back burner as far as I'm concerned. Mr. Tree (and Mr.)'s first priority is to tell this "Don Decker" story, and that's how good. And I hope it takes at least three issues to do it. Mr. Tree is great.

Oh, yes, I know that with greater perfection and such a big chunk of story pages in each issue that you might find a somewhat story a little daunting, but I think if you have a little faith in as detailed MS TREE from we must surprise you with what we'll put up with.

As for the "Midnight" book series, so far this first episode looks pretty good... but I do have one or two minor quibbles. For starters, I've not seen that I agree with the concept of the book saying anything... even as though he's been there. The other thing goes to show us what he was thinking, and I think it adds to the characterization of the one we have

seen tonight in a dramatic's thought. So I think you and writer Decker could use up a book.

Finally, as to the "Midnight Story" I like the concept. Every so often, there is a capsule of something that we might think of as we're busy looking at the world, it can add levels of tension when we have to imagine what something or someone looks like instead of being able to see it as well as I also like the concept of having different characters from the "Midnight Story" series, and I look forward to all of the various ones you've promised us to be.

I'm glad Mr. Tree's back, and I'm glad DC's got her. It shows there's hope for you guys yet.

David Peris
4517 Black Rock Rd.
Chico, CA 95921

Actually, DC's been publishing greater-sized stuff for some time: **SHREK** and **THE BUTTER** (to name but two) preceded **MS**. There will be a lot more to come.

Dear Respondent

Please don't back MS TREE to death. If you don't believe that either **Midnight** or the "Change Monograph" (MS TREE QUARTERLY #2) "The Book's Power" by Mr. Allen Collins was an original work of the Collins' own **WILD DOGS** series. I like Layman and the Layman of Society, then I'd be content to know why not. Both could have been in public about morality, something monthly concepts, while providing something new and better.

One might expect this, if all people. Mr. Collins would have found the focus of Dick Tracy creator **Cliff Gould's** legacy, a variety of colorful villains is an important

ingredient of success for a comic book series. (A quick check of the **Midnight** series policy will show that DC certainly learned the lesson.)

Since the **Midnight** character of the Gould story's villains is not the distinctive character of the villain in Collins' DC material (though **Harry Henry's** depiction of **Midnight** was certainly a prison or character), it was the only one in MS TREE QUARTERLY (and **WILD DOGS**) was the only one in the series. This and characterizations are the only Collins work to distinguish the villain from another.

In the case of **Midnight** and **Layman**, the similarities outweigh the differences. Is the Collins will return to, or does he have a literary obsession that's interfering with his creative judgment?

A variety of colorful villains is important for, but not necessary to, success. I've heard there's a series of books called **The Encyclopedia** that put its proposals across the same villains every episode, and Mr. Tree's own **Midnight** series was similar in content to what I've heard about that series. In both cases, however, a clear connection (perhaps) was established as the previous that was noted.

What was Collins' motive in doing **Layman** (and/or) **Layman**? Please don't back MS TREE to death.

David Melrose Peris
3215 18th Ave.
Sacramento, CA 95833-1021

MEET SEASON: An old flame goes back into Mr. Tree's life, as his wife's first **Midnight** series and **Midnight** who's the prime suspect? Plus, another **Midnight** thriller, of course.

— Mike Gold



Part of him ached to leap from the boulders and join the chanting, dancing throng, who had resumed circling the fire clockwise.

What if it were true, he thought. What if they could banish the white man through the supreme act of faith? Would the buffalo return to the prairie? The

white man's education couldn't entirely erase those feelings from his soul — there was something in every Lakota, probably in every human being including whites, that responded to the ancient call of faith. The white man had turned his back on mysticism, but the red man still clung to it — it was the cornerstone of a life rich in meaning.

The dancing became more frenetic. Some young men threw themselves to the ground in a frenzy and writhed as if possessed. Others leaped high into the air, performing a complicated series of maneuvers before touching down. Occasionally a dancer would break from the circle to take a drink from one of numerous circulating bottles.

Butcher thought about ditching his pistol and joining them — in their present state, they probably wouldn't notice. He found himself shaking his leg in time to the rhythm, and wondered again if Crippled Elk might not have real power — power enough to influence his enemies.

As the shouting and dancing reached a crescendo, Crippled Elk stepped out of the western darkness — stepped out of the black path of war and destruction, his hands held high. At once the assembly

fell silent. Crippled Elk wore a buffalo horn bonnet decorated with eagle feathers, probably obtained in defiance of DNR

law. He wore the torn blue shirt of a South Dakota State Highway Patrol

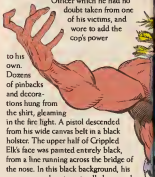
Officer which he had no doubt taken from one of his victims, and wore to add the cop's power

to his own.

Dozens of pinbacks and decorations hung from the shirt, gleaming in the fire light. A pistol descended from his wide canvas belt in a black holster. The upper half of Crippled Elk's face was painted entirely black, from a line running across the bridge of the nose. In this black background, his eyes appeared preternaturally large and luminous, as if lit from within.

"Brethren," Crippled Elk rumbled in a voice like rolling thunder. "The one known as Crippled Elk has brought you this far, but in order for us to succeed in

^{THE} BUTCHER



G H O S T

MIKE BARON • WRITER

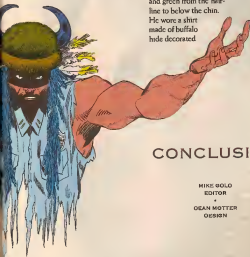
driving the white man from the center of the earth, we need a great old warrior, one who is steeped in blood, one who will not hesitate! It is no longer Crippled Elk that stands before you, but the Lakota war shaman Shatter Eye!"

A column of flame rose out of the earth behind Crippled Elk, followed an instant later by a roar. Crippled Elk stood motionless before the fire, his hands upraised.

"Shatter Eye!" a man shouted, and the

crowd took up the chant. "Shatter Eye! Shatter Eye! Shatter Eye!" The throng began to circle the fire. Crippled Elk joined them, dancing with feverish abandon. Faster and faster they circled the flame, their cries becoming incoherent until finally they sounded like the ululating yips of a pack of wolves.

Crouched among the rocks, Butcher dug through his pack until he found the package of greasepaint, a Joker Halloween kit from Ben Franklin. Working in darkness, he smeared his face with bands of black and green from the hairline to below the chin. He wore a shirt made of buffalo hide decorated

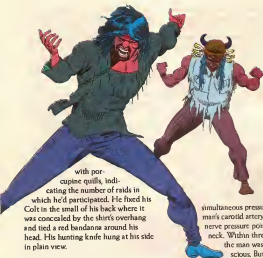


CONCLUSION

MIKE GOLO
EDITOR
+
DEAN MOTTER
DESIGN

DANCE

SHEA ANTON PENZA • ILLUSTRATOR



with porcupine quills, indicating the number of raids in which he'd participated. He fixed his Colt in the small of his back where it was concealed by the shirt's overhang and tied a red bandanna around his head. His hunting knife hung at his side in plain view.

Lastly, Butcher removed three phosphorus grenades from his pack. If Crippled Elk rode in on a column of flame, Butcher would ride in on three. Silently, Butcher crept from his hiding place, circled the eastern edge of the plateau, planting his grenades ten feet apart at the very rim of the rock. Butcher knew the burning phosphorus would keep them cemented to the rock until the phosphorus was exhausted, then they would tumble over the edge. It was an old Special Forces trick. When he was satisfied that they were well placed, he ran from one to the next pulling the pins, then whirled to face the fire. Twenty feet away stood a sentry, also facing the fire. Butcher slipped silently behind him and applied

simultaneous pressure to the man's carotid artery and a nerve pressure point in his neck. Within three seconds the man was unconscious. Butcher

lowered him carefully to the ground.

WHUMP! WHUMP! WHUMP! The triple shock nearly threw Butcher on his face but he recovered and stood tall as the chanting circle stopped and stared. Butcher could see his statue, outlined as if at high noon, stretching toward the fire in the light of the phosphorus grenades. They burned for at least fifteen seconds and were much brighter than the bonfire, or the gasoline fire Crippled Elk had used.

In the moment of silence, as some Indians reached for their weapons, Butcher called out in a loud, firm voice, "I am Shatter Eye. Who steals my name?"



There was a series of sharp metallic clicks as weapons were cocked. Butcher stood his ground, arms upraised, palms toward the fire. "I am Shatter Eye! Who steals my name?"

Crippled Elk quickly regained his composure. The barrel-like figure began to approach with an ominous rolling gait. Some Indians had circled behind him, but by then the grenades had exhausted themselves and tumbled over the rim.

Someone found the unconscious guard and shouted.

At last Crippled Elk and Butcher stood face to face. It was appropriate that Butcher faced west and Crippled Elk faced east, along the black path of war. Both men folded their arms across their chests and regarded each other as two mighty chiefs meeting for the first time.

"I am Shatter Eye," Crippled Elk asserted in a steady voice. "Who are you?" "I am Shatter Eye, little man," Butcher replied, adding the gratuitous insult.

Crippled Elk stepped forward so that their faces were within two feet of one another, and spoke quietly in a voice meant just for him. "You're one very brave, crazy, and stupid mother. One word from me and you're a piece of

Swiss cheese. Give me one reason why I shouldn't give it."

Butcher turned to address the crowd which now circled them. Incongruously, he thought of playing Marc Antony in his high school production of Julius Caesar, and how he had despised being forced to act in a meaningless white man's ritual.

"The little man has threatened to shoot me with the white man's weapons! I have died before — I am not afraid. But why is the little man afraid to fight me? I would think him brave, to

claim my name, unless he is a faker, like the white man, and sought to trick you." Then he repeated the whole thing in Lakota. In Lakota, he asked Crippled Elk, "What is the master? Don't you speak the language?"

Crippled Elk turned on his heel and strode out of the circle, unaware that Butcher walked right behind him. "Shoot him," Crippled Elk commanded, gesturing back toward the circle, surprised to find the circle empty, momentarily befuddled by Butcher's disappearance. Butcher had turned behind him as expertly as Bugs Bunny avoiding Elmer Fudd's shotgun. His deft, ballet-like movement



brought smiles of appreciation and a smattering of laughter from the onlookers. Wankan Tanka was smiling on his enterprise.

Grinning, Butcher said, "Why does he not speak the language?" He repeated his question in Lakota. Several of the men understood and began turning to the others, explaining what he had said. Now you couldn't pay them to shoot Butcher. They sensed a challenge to their leader and like independent warriors everywhere, wanted to know the outcome.

Crippled Elk sensed this turning of loyalties and reached for his pistol. Butcher had been waiting for the move and responded by whipping the butt of his hunting knife down on Crippled Elk's wrist with sufficient force to shatter an ordinary man's bones. Crippled Elk dropped the gun and swung with his left, a swift, brutal jab which Butcher barely managed to avoid, jerking his head back.

Butcher danced away laughing. "Ah! I see the little man rises to the challenge!" he said in Lakota. "Very well, little man! Do not be in such a hurry! I will send you to the land of your ancestors soon enough." He was gratified to hear the men repeat his words in English. He could sense their growing doubt about Crippled Elk. Why couldn't the man speak Lakota? Who controlled the magic?



Carefully, Butcher raised his shirt to reveal the gun. Slowly, he unstrapped the holster belt, held it up for all to see, and hurled it into the darkness. Men went after it at once. Butcher had deliberately chosen the heavy old .45 automatic because it was an antique — the type of gun Shatter Eye would have recovered from U.S. cavalry in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

"This guy's a faker!" Crippled Elk shouted. "You know me! You know what I've done for you — so he speaks Lakota! Big deal! How many of you speak Lakota? He's probably an FBI agent!"

"He calls me the fake," Butcher shouted in Lakota. "He says it's a trick I speak the people's language and he does not! How stupid does he think you are? Enough talk, little man! You claim to be me — show me. Shatter Eye is a great Warrior! The real Shatter Eye will kill the fake Shatter Eye!" It just slipped out and he was stuck with it. But somehow he knew these men wouldn't be satisfied with a best two out of three, nor would Crippled Elk accept defeat.

They circled each other, lit by the bonfire

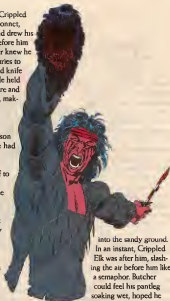
and the light of the full moon. Crippled Elk removed the buffalo horn bonnet, handed it to Wesley Wilson, and drew his hunting knife, holding it low before him with the blade tilted up. Butcher knew he would have to sustain some injuries to penevere against an experienced knife fighter such as Crippled Elk. He held his own blade in a similar posture and they danced around each other, making tentative swipes.

From the corner of his eye, Butcher could see Wesley Wilson peering at him, uncertain if he had been recognized.

Crippled Elk committed himself to a forward thrust — Butcher wheeled to one side avoiding the blade with an aikido motion, countering with his own knife inside Crippled Elk's armpit. But the shorter man was surprisingly quick — he clamped his arm down, trapping Butcher's knife hand. Crippled Elk dashed down, cutting through Butcher's pants. Butcher could feel the blade sliding off his shinbone.

Gripping the back of Crippled Elk's arm with his trapped knife hand, he simultaneously worked the knife up into the shoulder blade while firing a vicious elbow strike with his free hand. Crippled Elk's nose flattened with a crunch, but the shorter man did not even pause. With enormous strength, he reached across with his free hand, grabbed Butcher by the hair and threw him to the ground.

Crippled Elk leapt upon the prostrate Butcher, who rolled out of the way, barely escaping Crippled Elk's knife as it thunked



into the sandy ground. In an instant, Crippled Elk was after him, slashing the air before him like a semaphore. Butcher could feel his pantleg soaking wet, hoped he could end the fight before he

was weakened by loss of blood.

Butcher grabbed a handful of dirt and throw it in Crippled Elk's face. It failed to stop the war shaman's rush as he barreled into Butcher's mid-section, carrying him to the ground with a bone-rattling shock. Their arms locked, empty hand against knife hand, one on each side. They rolled in the dirt, the blades dipping in and out, nicking an ear, a cheek, until both men were cut about the face, blood and sweat mingling with the smeared warpaint.

Crippled Elk used his superior bulk to work his way on top. He held Butcher between his knees, forcing his knife, which was in his right hand, closer and closer to Butcher's face. Many things flashed through Butcher's mind — his grandfather's gentleness, his mother's love, the cry of a hawk. Crippled Elk's contorted face changed to that of Randall Corvus' and back again. He flashed on a thousand things he'd learned and forgotten and this popped into his head: Do the unexpected.

Without thinking, Butcher suddenly relaxed his pressure on Crippled Elk's knife arm, while jerking the arm to the side and twisting his head out of the way. The blade scraped along his cheek, the knuckles mashing his nose, but the hand was where he wanted it. He clamped onto Crippled Elk's smallest finger, biting through muscle and gristle to the bone, feeling his tooth crack against the metal tang of the knife.

Criending and foaming bloody at the mouth, Butcher worked the finger until with a final jerk, it came loose. He spat it out, letting go for the shaman's knife hand and whipping his elbow back and forth across the shaman's face, which was now a bloody mess. Again Crippled Elk raised the knife, blood running down his forearm and dripping off his elbow. With a massive effort, Butcher heaved him to one side, slid his knife out from under the shaman's crushing weight, and jammed it into the floating ribs.

The shaman refused to die. With bull-like strength, he struggled to his knees, whipping his knife out blindly to ward off Butcher, spraying the crowd with blood. Butcher rolled away, got to his legs and

fired a vicious frost kick into the side of the shaman's head. Crippled Elk went down but again struggled up, this time to his feet, and lunged, hissing between his teeth. Butcher stepped to one side and brought his blade down in an arc across Crippled Elk's throat.

Crippled Elk turned toward him slowly, dead on his feet but not knowing it. His heart pumped hideous gouts of blood from the gaping wound as the shaman shuffled forward through sheer force of will. Holding his knife by the handle, Butcher sank to one knee and threw it into Crippled Elk's heart from a distance of one foot. The blade sank halfway in — Butcher followed it with a palm heel thrust that drove it the rest of the way in. Crippled Elk crumpled to the ground.

Again the eerie silence as the warriors regarded him with a mixture of awe and suspicion. Wesley Wilson stood near the center of the circle, staring intently at Butcher. But the bloody, paint-smearing figure who crouched before the fallen body of their leader bore little resemblance to the biker in the Black Hills bar.

Butcher looked up. All eyes were on him. They were waiting for something — it wasn't over yet. Rolling Crippled Elk onto his belly, Butcher crouched behind him, raising his head by the thick hair at the front. With a deft slicing motion, he slipped his blade under the scalp and cut it free. Standing, he held the bloody scalp aloft, brandishing his knife in his other hand.

"Do you see, my people? This is the face of all false prophets."

Now the assembly had closed in. There was absolute silence. As Butcher watched in horror, Wesley Wilson, who stood near the front of the mob, silently mouthed the words "Fat Boy." It was time to go.

Butcher leaped into the air, turning 360 degrees and yelping like a mad man. Brandishing the scalp aloft in one hand and his hand in the other, he ran pell-mell toward the eastern rim, yipping all the way. It took the mob five seconds to react.

"After him!" Wesley Wilson yelled, and the mob surged forward. But by then Butcher had disappeared into the shadows. With quick, deft motions, he slipped on the parachute pack, tightened the shoulder straps and fastened the strap across his chest. Backing up, he sank into a runner's crouch to get up momentum. If he failed to clear the rim of the cliff by ten feet, he would be dashed to death on the jagged protrusions.

The mob was now a hundred feet away, carrying torches and powerful flashlights and screaming like madmen, whether in approbation or anger Butcher could not tell. With a final ululating shriek, he sprinted to the

edge and kicked off, disappearing into the void.

The wind rushed around him as he struggled for the release. He had only six hundred feet to deploy the chute and land or he was a pizza. Suddenly his shoulders were snapped up and the strap tightened painfully across his chest, squeezing out his breath. The ground was coming up at an alarming rate. Using the two lines that controlled the vents, he steered the parabolic chute counter-clockwise, circling back toward the butte, trying to hug the sides on the way down. As he swung too far back, his feet grazed one of the jagged granite protrusions, sending excruciating pain along his injured calf. An owl flew by, hung in the air adjacent to his head and momentarily regarded him from a distance of ten feet.

"Little brother," Butcher nodded. And then he hit the ground. He rolled over a series of jagged rocks before he was able to stop himself. For a second he just lay there, trying to control his breathing and praying that he hadn't broken anything. "Wankan Tanka, give me a break," he muttered.

Quickly, he gathered in the black





parachute and sliced it into strips with his knife. These he used to bind his leg, and some less serious wounds on his arms and torso. The rest of the parachute he tied in a bundle and carried with him. It was nearly dawn by the time he reached his Fat Boy, hidden by a pile of tumbleweeds in a draw a hundred feet from a dirt road.

Ignoring the pain in his leg, he reached Perry Thiggen's house on the Belle Fourche Reservation in two hours. Still no sign of Perry. The interior stank of stale liquor, beer, and cigarettes, and the scarred wood floor was covered with newspapers, gun, girls, and sports magazines.

Butcher took a shower, cleaned and bandaged his leg. He was trying to straighten out the mess in the living room when a wave of fatigue washed over him. He barely made it to the sofa before collapsing.

Butcher woke to the sound of Perry's pickup laboring up the rutted drive. The truck stopped, the door slammed, and Perry thumped up the broken wooden steps and through the screen door. He stopped in the middle of the room when he saw Butcher lying on the sofa.

"Man, you wouldn't believe what I saw last night."

Butcher sat up, tried to stretch, but quit when the pain became too great. "What's that, man?"

Perry stood stock-still in the middle of the room, peering at Butcher with feverish intensity. There seemed to be smudges of paint or make-up around Perry's eyes. He stepped up to the sofa and looked at Butcher's bandaged leg.

"You," he hissed. "You were on the butte last night. You tried to kill Shatter Eye!"

"What are you talking about, man?"

"Why would you want to do that, John? Why would you want to kill the greatest Lakota leader in a hundred years?"

Butcher sighed. "Because, man, he's not a great leader. He's a sucking charlatan, a madman, a screwball, and if you guys had gone ahead with his plans, you would have provoked a law and order backlash that would have set the Indian movement back a century."

"You're wrong, man. You don't know what you're messing with. You turned your back on the old ways and now they don't work for you. But they work for us. I'm going to have to ask you to leave."

"What do you mean, Perry? What did you mean when you said I 'tried' to kill Shatter Eye?"

"I mean after you leaped off the cliff, Shatter Eye's wounds closed. His hair grew back. In one hour, we're moving on the Federal Courthouse in Rapid City — our agents are already in place."

E N D